Centenary Despite Fire

Lockport, Ill. — (NC) — Despite a $40,000 fire which destroyed the main altar and sanctuary of St. Denis here, plans for its centenary celebration scheduled for May 26 are going forward.

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The Literary Cavalcade

'The Green Years'

By John O'Connor

In line with some recent remarks on movements affecting the book world and American writing, I thought I might hitch on the treatment of the novel for the stage or the screen.

Where the play usually remains close to the book as it is written, Hollywood sometimes goes so far afield that the only similarity with a work they buy and the movie they make lies in the weary and threadworn title.

But before "throwing the book" at some of the producers in Bagdad-on-the-Pacific, it might be a good idea to give praise where praise is due. There have been a few exceptions to the Hollywood ruin of a plot — and the most recent has been "The Green Years."

Let the cheap producers and writers take heed; let the honest producers and writers take heart!

* * *

At the moment I'm not concerned with the acting, the direction, nor the photography, being a journeyman book critic and not a veteran movie critic. My point about this film is that it has been handled intelligently and with a rare fidelity to a plot that was conceived and executed by one of the better novelists of our day. And in view of the many poor productions which are insults to the American intelligence, this alone is a most happy and welcome fact.

* * *

You may recall the novel: Robert Shannon, a little Irish Catholic orphan arrives in Scotland from Dublin, an unwelcome burden in the home of his thrifty grandparents. Their parsimony is one thing; their attempts to turn the child towards the Established Church is another — and neither are welcomed by the homesick, lonesome child.

He himself however is welcomed by the unregenerate great-grandfather, Alexander Gow — the village idler, teller of tall tales, tippler . . . and shrewd observer of human nature. A universal character, it is his complete honesty of purpose that routs those hypocritical types that shall ever be part of the human race until it is no more.

It is here that Hollywood has scored. A. J. Cronin has created a great character. The producer and director put him on the screen as he is — and both the author and the movie people have made a definite contribution to the lasting characters in their respective fields.

* * *

There is a wealth of good acting in this effort that has just been released. The devotee of that most sterile of all enterprises, insurance, the penny-pinching civil servant; the tyrannical great-grandmother, the quiet, submissive kitchen drudge of a grandmother; the gnarled and stained men of dour Scotland's mills and mines . . . all these are here in a rare realism.

Ignoring the characters, who are universal, you are also taken up with the realism with which life of the past generation is filmed. To anyone having taught school, the few classroom scenes are flawless. Robert Shannon, butt of the bullies in the class (and there is no one quite as heartless or cruel as the primary school tyrant in his collective malice) is a poignant figure. His sole school fight is the usual boy fight of many blows and few effective punches; his quiet scholarship is as deceptively surprising as the kind you run into in the normal classroom.

* * *

Robert Shannon grows up. He receives his First Communion with his proud great-grandfather the only member of the family present. It is in his hours of greatest pressure that he finds the merry old deist far more understanding of the Church and the Faith than the church-going bigots in the family and in the village.

There is romance, of course. But there is Love; the love of the old roisterer for the boy; the love of the headmaster for his prize pupil; the love of two students that is dissolved in a tragic accident at the peak of promise when the promised land of careers stretches before them.

* * *

Some may call this "slow" — but they are those who must be thrilled synthetically by cheap humor and low comedy. I stress the work because it is true to life — and has a maturity most American films seem to lack.

I understand that in the next few months we are to be steeped in bad plots and worse musicals. If that is so, it is well that we have such occasional gems as "The Green Years." We need more of them. I don't believe in robbing the public with musicals, with murders, or with vulgar mirth.

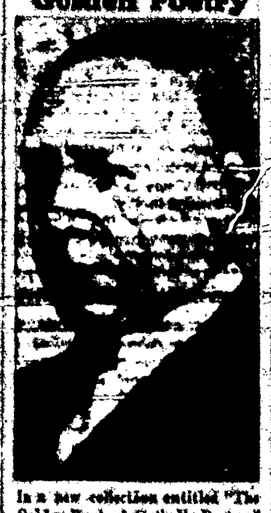
For a while it looked as though the screen found that Barnum was right. It may also find out that Lincoln was right and we are all of the people.

You can't feed the people too long with junk. You will secure their support with work such as THE GREEN YEARS. It is a forward step in the right direction. It is an added proof that sound morality results in sound business.

Book on Saint

A new work on ST. PAUL, APOSTLE AND MARTYR, by Igino Giordani, famed Vatican scholar, interprets the brilliant career of the Apostle among the Gentiles. Illuminating, intelligible, and smoothly translated, this book should be of especial interest to all those interested in Catholic Action.

Golden Poetry



In a new collection entitled "The Golden Book of Catholic Poetry," the distinguished Alfred Noyes presents a rarity "golden book, gathering for us the flowers of Catholic literature."

Library Signpost

Two Leaders: R. I. P.

By Rev. Benedict Ehmann

With the death of Monsignor Stedman and of Mother Stevens in the latter part of March, the Catholics of America have lost two of the most remarkable religious pioneers of modern times.

FR. EHMANN

Their vocation under God fell within the orbit of that period which was inaugurated by the great Pope Pius X, whose motto and work was "to restore all things in Christ." The means he chose and promoted with all his might was a Eucharistic Renaissance, that all the faithful might be energized for the immense apostolate of the twentieth century by drawing their strength from its chief Source, the Mass and Holy Communion.

But all crusades need leaders to support the commander-in-chief. God provided such leaders for Pius X. Among the greatest and most influential of them were Monsignor Stedman and Mother Stevens. Their deaths two weeks ago bring to a close an early but important chapter of the Eucharistic Renaissance. The measure of their influence may be taken in the fact that already the lines of the next chapter are being enthusiastically developed. Each of them might have recognized a kinship with Mary Stuart's "In my end is my beginning." The end of Spring is the beginning of Summer. The memory of Monsignor Stedman and of Mother Stevens will always be fragrant with the sweetness of the Eucharistic springtime which is such a blessed mark of the time in which we have been living. Their prayers in heaven will foster its summertime maturing and will be the augury of a generous harvest.

* * *

The accomplishments of Monsignor Stedman was eloquently presented in the eulogy which Monsignor James Griffiths of the Military Ordinariate preached at the funeral. He said, in part:

"He gave himself unstintingly . . . in superhuman, unparalleled ingenious efforts which taxed to extinction every fiber in his making, to make Jesus, the Blood-stained Eucharistic Victim of Sacrifice, more intensely loved by those for whom He had poured forth His Blood. He wanted the great multitudes of the faithful to know the too-long hidden beauties of the Mass and its Liturgy. As he so frequently remarked with a subtle, reverent pause of humor, 'I want to take the "Big Book" of the altar and put it in the hands of the people so that they will not only be present at Mass but will offer the Divine Victim in union with the priest.' Over and over again he would repeat the words of the saintly Pius X. The Mass is the primary and indispensable source of the true Christian spirit. The faithful will be filled with this spirit only in proportion as they participate in the Sacred Mysteries."

* * *

Monsignor Stedman's efforts could be called by any normal standards superhuman. Most people are familiar with the handy portable format which he devised for the Missal. It is startling to realize that he distributed fifteen million of them in his short lifetime of fifty years. He donated over two million to America's fighting men. Many believe he distributed more than a quarter of 50,000 copies in Italian to Italy. He issued translations in Spanish, French, Polish, Chinese, Japanese and Indian. Conscious that a knowledge and love of the Scriptures plays a great part in appreciating the Mass, he prepared a pocket-size "Daily Readings in the New Testament" which is now widely used. All-but completed is a new edition of the Breviary in parallel columns of Latin and English.

Over 25,000 viewed his remains in a final tribute. Here surely is a sign of the work he has made, vital and deep. R. I. P.

Mother Stevens was twenty-five years older than Monsignor Stedman when she passed away peacefully in her sleep Thursday noon, March 28, after a morning of her usual labors. A convert to the Church in her youth, she dedicated her exceptional gifts to religion, joining the Religious of the Sacred Heart and spending her novitiate at Roehampton in England under the famous Mother Janet Erskine Stuart. She was soon given the position of teaching music. The fruit of her ordinary assignment an extraordinary achievement, and the fruit of it was the establishment, in 1918, of the now world-famous Pius X School of Liturgical Music, named after the Pope who revered so much, and espoused to the cause of advancing the work called for by his Motu Proprio on Church Music. The early years of the School were inseparably linked with the faithful cooperation of Justine Ward, and together they worked out a remarkable pedagogic system for teaching the Church's music to the young. Even after their later divergence, Mother Stevens had nothing but the kindest of words for this valiant service.

* * *

The greatest characteristic of Mother Stevens were her ardent enthusiasm for the beauty of the Church, and a gracious manner which radiated in an abundant sense of humor and in an unfailing instinct for the human touch in all she did. She was great as a person and not as a speaker. On Laetare Sunday, the day before her funeral, she spoke with joy in the thought of God's mercies descending to us in the arms of a motherly Church so soon to be renewed in fruitfulness by the graces of the Redemption. Mother Stevens was never the harsh zealot. She always radiated the "zeal of the Lord's house" in love and gentleness and overflowing good spirits. She was truly a Mother in whom love prevailed over all else, winning countless souls to a deeper understanding of the love of the Church and of the love of God. R. I. P.

Information Desk

Why the Repository?

It has always puzzled me why the Blessed Sacrament is put in to the repository on Holy Thursday. I should think that on that day, of all days, it should be exposed in the monstrance.

One reason why the Blessed Sacrament is not placed in the monstrance on Holy Thursday is that exposition is a joyous thing, and it would not be appropriate to be joyful during the mournful ceremonies of that holy time. Another reason is that the practice of the repository as such is more ancient than that of exposition of a monstrance.

Originally the repository was merely the place where the Blessed Sacrament was kept on Holy Thursday and Good Friday in case there were any sick calls. But popular devotion stepped in. Today we have the practice of reverently adoring Christ in the repository in reparation for the great insult He suffered in His passion and in celebration of the institution of the Blessed Sacrament. It is for this reason that the repository is decorated with candles and flowers and people throng to the churches on this day. This practice reached full development by about 1550.

It is true that the sorrow of these Holy Week solemnities do not give us the chance to celebrate as joyously as we might desire the institution of the Blessed Sacrament. That is the reason — or at least one of them — why the Church instituted the feast of Corpus Christi for the period after Easter, when there is nothing to impede a joyful celebration of this mystery. On that feastday exposition and procession with the Most Blessed Sacrament is an essential part of the solemnity.

How ancient a practice is the observance of Lent?

Our forty day Lent dates back at least to the third or fourth century, and some writers have even claimed that it goes back to the time of the Apostles. However, scholars are now fairly well agreed that the Apostolic observance of the Crucifixion and Redemption fitted into a weekly cycle whence we still have our Friday abstinence and Sunday Mass obligation. As time went on the annual observances in the spring appeared, though at first they varied widely according to localities and conditions. Hence some observing a strict forty hour abstinence from all food and drink in honor of the Savior's entombment, others choosing longer but less rigid fasts.

The earliest certain record to be found of a forty day observance is in the writings of St. Athanasius. His episcopal "Festal Letters" of 331 A.D. instructs the faithful of Alexandria to fast for forty days previous to the much stricter observances of Holy Week. Eight years later in a similar exhortation he observes that "all the world is fasting. . . in those days." By the early Middle Ages this forty day period had become the accepted thing, prompted, as the Liturgy frequently insists, by Jesus' own forty day fast at the beginning of His ministry, (Matt. IV: 2), and by similar fasts of the great Old Testament figures, Moses, "Deuteronomy IX: 9" and Elias, (3 Kings XIX: 8). In the Middle Ages, we learn from St. Bernard, the famous "Black Fast" had become popular prescribing abstinence from meat and all its derivatives and only one meal a day to be taken in the evening. Since then a gradual moderation has ensued until the new Code of Church Law in 1918 fixed our present regulations with the exception that there exists a special Apostolic grant to the United States allowing Wednesday rather than Saturday abstinence except in Holy Week.

Know It?

(Answers on page 11)

If you answer all five, you're perfect; three or four, good; if only one or two, not so good.

1. Why are the church bells and the organ silent from Holy Thursday to Holy Saturday?
2. In a picture of the Last Supper, how are the apostles St. John and Judas Iscariot identified?
3. Name five cities in the United States named for a saint or angels.
4. Transpose the second syllables of these words and each will be the name of an apostle:

Phi-deus	Tho-rew
And-lip	Thad-mas
Pa-mes	Ja-ul

5. To identify the season of the Christian year described in the following passage from Hamlet, insert the two missing words:

"Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our . . . 's . . . is celebrated,
The bird of dawning singeth all night long;
And then, they say, no spirit can walk abroad;
The nights are wholesome; then no planets strike,
No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm;
So hallow'd and so gracious is the time."

Catholic Press Cited For War Bond Work

Washington — (NC) — A citation "for distinguished services rendered in behalf of the War Finance Program" by promoting the sale of War Bonds and Stamps has been awarded to the Catholic Press by the Treasury Department, it has been announced here.

A letter accompanying the citation said: "It is doubtful that the outstanding achievement of Catholic schools, which in the last school-year alone were responsible for the sale of well over $65,000,000 in War Bonds and Stamps could have been attained without the help of the publicity" given through the Catholic Press.

Washington's Good F[illegible] Plans Hailed by Pre[illegible]

Washington — (NC) — President Harry S. Truman has given his personal endorsement to the Three Hours observance of Good Friday here and expressed the hope that other communities throughout the country will follow the "fine example of cooperation" shown in the District of Columbia's plans for the day.

The President made his comment in a letter to Dr. Oscar F. Blackwelder, a Lutheran clergyman in Washington who is chairman of the Observance Committee.

Simultaneously with the President's letter, R. R. Zimmerman, [illegible]

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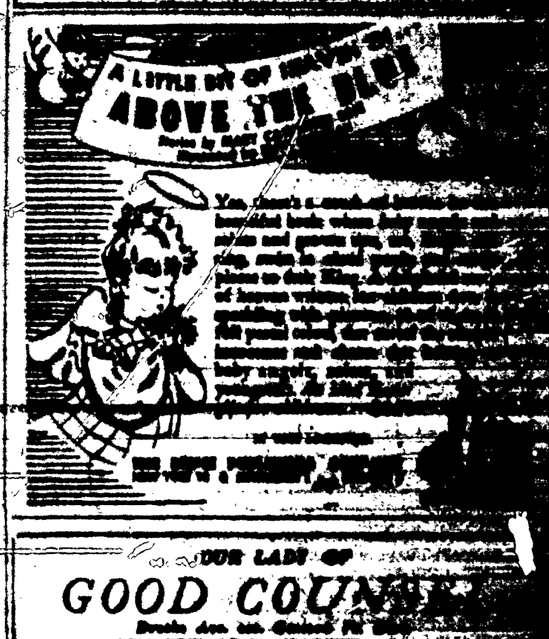

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